

Healing the Wounds of a Community in Kentucky continued from front cover

On the way to Golgotha, Christ was helped by Simon of Cyrene. The weight of the Cross was no longer something He could carry alone. As clergy, the weight of ministry is also too much to carry alone. We need trusted hierarchs, colleagues, and parishioners to help us.

In the aftermath of the tornadoes, IOCC showed compassion and commitment to the people of Bowling Green. But they didn't just care for a city wounded by a natural disaster; they also brought emotional and spiritual support to a parish wounded by a pandemic. Their service reminded me that healing often begins when we have the humility to ask for help.

I am deeply grateful for their ministry and that reminder.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Jason Blais

St. Antony Orthodox Christian Church, Tulsa, OK



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES
110 West Road, Suite 360
Baltimore, Maryland 21204

If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of *Priest to Priest*, please email asiegel@iocc.org



Help neighbors in the US get back on their feet after a disaster.
iocc.org/actionteam



Share your Lenten recipes!

Email outreach@iocc.org to have your recipe considered for our Lenten series.



PRIEST *to* PRIEST

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR ORTHODOX CLERGY

2026 Issue 1



Healing the Wounds of a Community in Kentucky

A Reflection by Fr. Jason Blais

In the early hours of December 11, 2021, two tornadoes carved a 22-mile path through Bowling Green, Kentucky in less than 40 minutes. We heard the emergency alert on our phones a little after 1:00 a.m., but it wasn't until morning that we understood the extent of the damage. Sixteen

lives were lost, and nearly 500 homes were destroyed. But the storm didn't just tear through buildings, it carved a path through the spirit of our town.

I reached out to IOCC, and within four days they had a team of Frontliners on the ground, ready to care for those affected by the disaster. I had known of IOCC's work in disaster zones, but what I didn't expect was how they would minister to the silent suffering of a parish still reeling from the effects of COVID-19.

As clergy, we often find it difficult to ask for help. We are expected to have the answers, and when we don't, it's easy to feel inadequate. We fear that asking for help will be seen as weakness. But inevitably, our ministry brings circumstances we cannot handle alone. No matter how formative our seminary education might be, there are realities of priestly ministry that only lived experience can teach.

COVID was one of those obstacles. Seminary formed me for ministry in the life of the Church, but formation must continue after graduation. No classroom can fully prepare clergy for leading a community through extraordinary circumstances. I had never encountered fear, isolation, and loss on such scale as a priest before, and I had to learn to carry that emotional and spiritual weight. And while I knew my parish was suffering, I didn't know how to help them, or myself through that suffering.

And so when IOCC came to serve in the aftermath of the tornadoes, they ended up addressing the emotional and spiritual needs created by a crisis that had begun a year before. The Frontline team offered real pastoral care, not just to parishioners, but to me. They supported my ministry in ways I never anticipated. I'm so grateful for IOCC's help, because I didn't realize how much I needed someone to show they cared.

No matter how much knowledge or skill we have, at some point it won't be enough. God willing, we learn to embrace our limitations with humility. Because humility isn't just about enduring hardship, it's also about receiving help when we've reached the end of our strength. True humility means accepting what it is to be human.



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

Headquarters: 110 West Road, Suite 360 • Baltimore, MD 21204 USA
Tel: 410.243.9820 • Fax: 410.243.9824 • E-mail: relief@iocc.org • Website: iocc.org

MEETING NEEDS WORLDWIDE

WHETHER IN RESPONSE to conflict, disaster, and other emergencies, or as part of long-term support that helps communities thrive, IOCC is meeting basic human needs around the world serving in the spirit of Christ's love.

Learn more
and join us.



iocc.org

